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Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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R 301148Z NOV 73
FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3995
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
CJCS
CINCPAC
COMUSSAG
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY SAIGON

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 PHNOM PENH 13294

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, CB
SUBJ: THE FIRST SIX WEEKS OF THE GKR CONSCRIPTION/RECRUITMENT
CAMPAIGN

1. SUMMARY. SOMEWHAT TO THEIR OWN SURPRISE, GKR CIVIL
AND MILITARY OFFICIALS HAVE ESTABLISHED A CONSCRIPTION/
RECRUTIMENT SYSTEM WHICH HAS PRODUCED OVER 12,000 MEN
FOR THE ARMY, NAVY AND AIR FORCE OR CLOSED TO THE NUMBER
WHICH FANK'S STILL DEVELOPING TRAINING SYSTEM COULD ABSORB.
THESE POSITIVE, IF STILL MODEST, RESULTS HAVE HELPED REDUCE
WIDELY HELD DOUBTS THAT THE GOVERNMENT COULD IN FACT IMPLEMENT
NATIONAL CONSCRIPTION. CIVILIAN AND MILITARY
LEADERS ALIKE REMAIN UNCOMFORTABLE WITH OBLIGATORY SERVICE,
HOWEVER. THEY HAVE BEEN RELUCTANT TO IMPOSE SANCTIONS,
HAVE CONCENTRATED INSTEAD ON ARRANGEMENTS TO ATTACT VOLUNTEERS,
AND CONTINUE TO SPEAK PUBLICLY OF "PEOPLE'S WAR-FARE" DESPITE
THE CLEARLY CONVENTIONAL NATURE OF THE ENEMY THREAT.
AS BOTH ENTICEMENTS FOR VOLUNTEERS AND THE POOL OF WILLING
OR ACQUIESCENT RECRUITS ARE NEARING EXHAUSTION, THE CONSCRIPTION/
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RECRUITMENT PROGRAM MUST NOW EXPAND TO OTHER GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS

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AND DEVELOP MORE MUSCLE IF IT IS TO PRODUCE THE MANPOWER REQUIRED TO SEE FANK THROUGH THE DRY SEASON. THIS REPORT DISCUSSES POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE CAMPAIGN TO DATE AND OUTLINES WHAT MUST YET BE DONE. END SUMMARY.

2. POSITIVE ASPECTS. ACCUSTOMED TO AN ARMY WHICH ONE WAS ALLOWED TO ENTER AND LEAVE VIRTUALLY AT WILL AND A CIVIL GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS DEMANDED LITTLE (AND GIVEN EVEN LESS) TO AN INDEPENDENT-MINDED POPULATIION, KHMER CIVIL AND MILITARY LEADERS ALIKE WERE SOMEWHAT SKEPTICAL OF THEIR ABILITY TO MAKE A SUCCESS OF THE CONSCRIPTION PROGRAM WHEN IT WAS FIRST LAUNCHED ON OCTOBER 10. THE MILITARY FOUND THE CIVIL STRUCTURE TOO WEAK AND SUSCEPTIBLE TO BRIBES TO PRODUCE A SIZEABLE NUMBER OF CONSCRIPTS, AND THE CIVILIANS THOUGHT THE MILITARY LEADERS TO INSENSITIVE TO THEIR TROOPS WELFARE TO KEEP THOSE THEY RECEIVED. BOTH GROUPS HAVE PERFORMED BETTER THAN THEIR CRITICS AND PROBABLY THEY THEMSELVES BELIEVED.

A. AFTER SOME INITIAL CONFUSION THE CITY PRODUCED MACHINERY WHICH RESULTED IN THE APPEARANCE OF MORE THAN 14,000 YOUTH FROM OCTOBER 10 TO NOVEMBER 17; SLIGHTLY OVER HALF THIS NUMBER WERE FOUND ELIGIBLE AND WERE CONSCRIPTED OR VOLUNTEERED FOR MILITARY SERVICE AND WERE SENT TO THE ARMY'S RECEIPTION CENTER. AS EXPECTED, THERE HAS BEEN INADEQUATE COORDINATION AMONG THE CITY'S MANY LEVELS OF APPOINTED AND ELECTED OFFICIALS AND VERY LITTLE STANDARDIZATION OF PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA. AN ELEMENTARY SYSTEM OF REWARDS AND LIMITED PRESSURE NEVERTHELESS PRODUCED MORE INITIATIVE AND DILIGENCE THAN WE HAD PREVIOUSLY OBSERVED IN THE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT. THE ARREST OF THREE OFFICIALS, FIRING OF SIX, AND THE SUBMISSION OF 43 OTHERS TO FURTHER INVESTIGATION AMONG 126 CASES INVESTIGATED HELPED CUT DOWN FRAUD AND BRIBERY. SEVERAL KHAND AND SANGKAT CHIEFS WHO AT FIRST HAD ONLY PESSIMISM AND EXCUSES IN ADVANCE TO RELATE TO VISITING EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE NOW BEGUN TO SPEAK OF CONSCRIPTION AS A GOING PROGRAM.

B. THE ARMY, FOR ITS PART, PRODUCED A RECEPTION CENTER WITH GOOD FOOD WHEN RICE WAS BECOMING RARE, LIVE ENTER-TAINMENT AND, WHEN NOT OVERCROWDED BY TRANSPORTATION BOTTLENECKS, ABOVE AVERAGE LIVING QUARTERS. THE CENTER

HAS REGISTERED ONLY 47 DESERTERS AMONG THE 9749 MEN IT HAS RECEIVED AS OF COB NOVEMBER 29 (WHICH INCLUDES VOLUNTEERS ENTERING DIRECTLY AS WELL AS RECRUITS PROVIDED BY THE CITY'S SYSTEM).

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AMEMBASSY SAIGON

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C. THE TRAINING SYSTEM GOT OFF TO A LESS IMPRESSIVE
START, PARTICULARLY AS REGARDS LOVEK TRAINING CENTER (SEE
PHNOM PENH 11900), BUT THE REPLACEMENT OF THE DIRECTOR
GENERAL OF INSTRUCTION, HIS DEPUTY AND TWO TRAINING
CENTER COMMANDERS IS EXPECTED TO IMVPROVE PROBLEM AREAS
ASSOCIATED WITH A LACK OF LEADERSHIP AND COMMAND INTEREST.
THE GKR RECENTLY RELEASED 12 MILLION RIELS FOR THE CONSTRUC-
TION OF BARRACKS AND OTHER SUPPORT FACILITIES AT SIX NATIONAL
TRAINING CENTERS WHICH SHOULD HELP ALLEVIATE CONTINUING
HEALTH AND MORALE PROBLEMS, ASSOCIATED IN PART WITH THE
ONSET OF COOLER WEATHER. MISSION OFFICERS WERE IMPRESSED
WITH THE MANAGEMENT OF THE LARGER TRAINING CENTERS AT
KAMPONG SPEU AND SISOPHON, AND THE MORALE OF THE TRAINEES
DURING NOVEMBER 26 VISITS. THE PREY SAR AND LOVEK CENTERS,
ON THE OTHER HAND, CONTINUE TO EXPERIENCE DIFFICULTIES.
AS OF NOVEMBER 29, 8478 RECRUITS FROM THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN
WERE AT THE TRAINING CENTERS AND 557 OTHERS HAVE MOVED
INTO COMBAT UNITS AFTER COMPLETING THE SIX WEEKS COURSE.
PERSONNEL ABSENT WITHOUT AUTHORITY FROM THE ARMY TRAINING
CENTERS ARE NOW CARRIED AS 602, OF WHICH THE MAJORITY OCCURRED
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AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CAMPAIGN. THE NAVY HAS REGISTERED 326 DESERTERS AMONG ITS RECRUITS.

D. ALTHOUGH DESIGNED PRINCIPALLY TO MEET THE MANPOWER NEEDS OF THE ARMY'S INTERVENTION UNITS, THE CONSCRIPTION PROGRAM HAS, OF COURSE, AIDED THE RECRUITMENT DRIVES OF THE KHMER AIR FORCE (KAF) AND NAVY (MNK). FROM OCTOBER 10 TO NOVEMBER 20, KAF NETTED OVER 800 MEN AND THE MNK ENLISTED OVER 2800, 668 OF WHICH CAME FROM THE RECEPTION CENTER (AND ARE THUS INCLUDED IN THE FIGURES GIVEN IN PARA 2B). TOTAL GROSS ACCESSIONS (INCLUDING SUBSEQUENT DESERTERS) MOST OF WHICH TO GENERAL RESERVE (OF WHICH KAF AND MNK ARE A PART), SINCE THE CONSCRIPTION/RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN BEGAN HAS NOW EXCEED 12,600.

3. NEGATIVE ASPECTS. DESPITE SOME PRIDE OVER MOUNTING WHAT APPEARS TO BE A WORKABLE CONSCRIPTION/RECRUITMENT SYSTEM, BOTH CIVIL AND MILITARY OFFICIALS REMAIN ON THE WHOLE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE CONCEPT OF OBLIGATORY SERVICE. THIS UNEASINESS STEMS FROM AN AVERSION TO THE USE OF COERCION
AND FROM A WISHFUL BELIEF HELD BY LON NOL AND SOME OF HIS GENERALS AS WELL AS A MAJOR PART OF THE CIVIL BUREAUCRACY THAT THE NATION SHOULD NOW AS AT THE TIME OF INDEPENDENCE FIELD AN ARMY PRINCIPALLY THROUGH A VOLUNTARY "GENERAL MOBILIZATION" PROGRAM UNDER WHICH EVERY CITIZEN IS GIVEN A ROLE. AS A RESULT OF THIS ATTITUDE:

A. THE PROGRAM HAS FEATURED RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGNS BY INDIVIDUAL UNITS AND MILITARY COMMANDERS, ALL OF WHICH GENERALLY PLAY ON THE DESIRE OF MOST RECRUITS TO REMAIN CLOSE TO THEIR HOMES. THIS APPROACH HAS LED TO WIDE FLUCTUATIONS IN THE DAILY NUMBER OF ACCESSIONS (AS NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPINGS OF YOUTH VOLUNTEER TOGETHER FOR SPECIFIC UNITS) AND, MORE IMPORTANT, MAY POSE PROBLEMS WHEN THE TIME COMES TO ASSIGN RECRUITS WHO VOLUNTEERED FOR THE PHNOM PENH MILITARY DISTRICT, FOR EXAMPLE, TO THE HIGHER PRIORITY INTERVENTION DIVISIONS.

B. THERE HAS BEEN MUCH CONFUSION OVER WHO IS A VOLUNTEER AND WHO IS A CONSCRIPT. WE HAVE NOTED A STRONG TENDENCY

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ON THE PART OF CIVIL AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES ALIKE TO PLACE AS MANY AS POSSIBLE IN THE VOLUNTEER CATEGORY, WHICH HAS A LONGER PERIOD OF SERVICE. THIS HAS CAUSED FEW PROBLEMS AS YET BUT MAY GENERATE SOME IN THE FUTURE.

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AMEMBASSY SAIGON

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C. THE SANGKATS AND LOWER ECHELONS HAVE DONE LITTLE TO ENLARGE THEIR REGISTRATION ROLES. CITY OFFICIALS REPORT THAT PHNOM PENH HAS 31,957 YOUTH BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18 AND 35 WHO DO NOT FALL INTO DEFERRED CATEGORIES OUT OF AN ESTIMATED POPULATION OF 1.2 MILLION. REGISTRATION LISTS, INCLUDING BOTH ELIGIBLE AND DEFERRED PERSONS, CONTAIN ONLY 63,889. THESE FIGURES CLEARLY INDICATE THAT PHNOM PENH OFFICIALS HAVE NOT MADE A REALISTIC SURVEY OF MANPOWER RESOURCES.

D. VERY LITTLE ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN TO BRING IN THOSE WHO DO NOT RESPOND TO THE SANGKATS' CONVOCATIONS. ACCORDING TO OUR INTERPOLATION OF MUNICIPAL STATISTICS, ONLY 44 PERCENT OF THE RECIPIENTS OF CONVOCATIONS HAVE APPEARED AT THE EXAMINING BOARDS.

E. GKR OFFICIALS FROM LON NOL DOWN HAVE PUBLICLY CAMPAIGNED FOR AUTO-DEFENSE AND "PEOPLE'S WARFARE," GIVING THE CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT THIS APPROACH RATHER THAN INTER-VENTION UNITS ARE THE ANSWER TO THE DRY SEASON OFFENSIVE.

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WE CONTINUE TO RECEIVE INDICATIONS THAT LOCAL OFFICIALS IN PHNOM PENH ARE EXCLUDING AUTO-DEFENSE PARTICIPANTS FROM DRAFT CALLS, AND SOME PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS ARE OBVIOUSLY PUSHING AUTO-DEFENSE AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE DRAFT IN THEIR AREAS. THE COMMANDER OF THE POPULOUS THIRD MILITARY DISTRICT HAS IN PARTICULAR PROCRASTINATED ON INITIATING CONSCRIPTION IN BATTAMBANG, SIEM REAP AND PURSAT PROVINCES WHILE HE IS EXPANDING THE AUTO-DEFENSE PROGRAM BEYOND THE PROTECTIVE REACH OF EXISTING INTERVENTION UNITS.

4. REQUIRED ACTION: TO KEEP THE TRAINING CENTERS CLOSE TO THEIR CAPACITY AND TO PROVIDE THE MANPOWER REQUIRED BY THE GENERAL RESERVE TO MEET THE COMING DRY SEASON OFFENSIVE, WE BELIEVE THE ARMY SHOULD OBTAIN A DAILY AVERAGE OF 225 RECRUITS THROUGH THE MONTHS OF DECEMBER, JANUARY AND FEBRUARY AND PERHAPS LONGER. THE 50-DAY DAILY AVERAGE AT PRESENT IS 195 BUT THE LEVEL HAS BEEN LOWER IN RECENT WEEKS. WE HAVE THEREFORE SUGGESTED TO MARSHAL LON NOL AND CONSCRIPTION CHIEF OF STAFF MG THAPPANA NGINN THAT THE FOLLOWING STEPS BE TAKEN:

A. RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGNS WITH LOCAL RECEPTION CENTERS SHOULD BE OPENED IMMEDIATELY IN BATTAMBANG AND SIEM REAP TO PROVIDE THE INPUT TO THE SISOPHON TRAINING CENTER AND IN KOMPONG SOM AND KAMPOT TO SERVE THE REAM CENTER. COMMENT: AT PRESENT ONLY PHNOM PENH AND KANDAL PROVINCE ARE BEING EXPLOITED, ALTHOUGH OTHER PROVINCES (BUT NOT BATTAMBANG) HAVE SENT MILITARY OFFICIALS TO STUDY THE PHNOM PENH SYSTEM FOR IMITATION IN THEIR PROVINCES. SOME CHANGES IN PROVINCIAL LEADERSHIP, INCLUDING PERHAPS THE REPLACEMENT OF THE MR-3 COMMANDER, MAY BE REQUIRED TO ACCOMPLISH THIS AIM.

B. THE LARGE PHNOM PENH RESERVE OF MANPOWER MUST BE BETTER EXPLOITED BY OBLIGING LOCAL OFFICIALS TO EXPAND THEIR REGISTRATION LISTS, SENDING MIXED TEAMS OF SECURITY OFFICIALS TO SEEK OUT DRAFT EVADERS, AND MORE SHARPLY DELINEATING GROUNDS FOR DEFERRALS. COMMENT: THE PHNOM PENH GOVERNOR WILL PERHAPS HAVE TO GO IF HE CONTINUES TO POSTPONE ENFORCEMENT MEASURES.

C. PRIORITY SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE PROTECTION OF

TRAINING CENTERS, PARTICULARLY AT KAMPONG SPEU AND LOVEK.

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COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE LOCATIONS OF THESE CENTERS LEAVES THEM EXPOSED TO ENEMY ATTACK, ADEQUATE SECURITY FORCES AND BARRIER MATERIALS HAVE NOT YET BEEN MADE AVAILABLE. A SERIOUS ATTACK ON ONE OF THESE CAMPS WOULD NOT ONLY DISRUPT THE TRAINING PROGRAM BUT MIGHT ALSO SERIOUSLY DAMAGE FUTURE RECRUITMENT PROSPECTS.

D. THE FREE RICE RATION, WHICH IS SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER, MUST BE RAPIDLY IMPLEMENTED AND WELL PUBLICIZED BECAUSE IT WILL PROBABLY BE THE LAST RECRUITMENT INCENTIVE AVAILABLE BEFORE THE EXPECTED DRY SEASON OFFENSIVE.
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